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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
Fifty-fourth session

Summary record of the 4th meeting
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 24 February 2015, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Sadi

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports

(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant (*continued*)

Combined second and third periodic reports of Tajikistan (continued)
(E/C.12/TJK/2-3; E/C.12/TJK/Q/2-3 and Add.1; HRI/CORE/1/Add.128)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Tajikistan took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Shohmorud** (Tajikistan) said that, as part of his Government's active cooperation with civil society, on 16 February 2015, it had held a meeting with civil society representatives to discuss the combined second and third periodic reports on the implementation of the Covenant. The discussion had touched on a variety of issues and a number of proposals had been put forward for improvements in the economic and social spheres.

3. The freedom of economic and entrepreneurial activity, equal rights to and legal protection of all forms of property, including private property, the right to work, choice of profession and the rights to housing, health care, social protection and education were guaranteed under the Constitution of Tajikistan. Each person had the right to freely participate in the cultural life of society and scientific and technical work and to enjoy the benefits of progress in those fields. Despite the negative impact of regional and international political and economic processes, his country had maintained a high pace of economic growth from 2006 to 2014. The level of poverty was falling steadily: it had stood at 32 per cent in 2014. Factors that had helped to reduce poverty included good economic growth, remittances from migrants abroad and increased social expenditure.

4. In 2014, State spending in the social and economic sectors had been devoted to security, energy resources and construction and infrastructure projects. Under the National Development Strategy for the period up to 2015, the priorities were to improve access to basic social services and raise living standards. A National Development Council, established as a consultative body chaired by the President of Tajikistan, included representatives from the world of international finance, donor groups, the business community and civil society.

5. State budgetary resources had increased four-fold over the previous seven years. For 2015, the social sphere had been allocated 50 per cent of the State budget, facilitating the payment of public sector wages, pensions and benefits. The minimum and maximum levels of pensions would be raised by an average of 20 per cent.

6. His country accorded full labour rights, including the right to work, the choice of profession and social protection from unemployment. Tajikistan was an exporter of labour: more than 670,000 citizens travelled annually to perform seasonal work abroad, mostly in the Russian Federation. The Government's desire to protect the rights and interests of its citizens who were working abroad had led it to adopt relevant policies and strategies. Tajikistan had ratified the main international conventions on labour migration and had signed intergovernmental and interregional agreements regulating procedures for Tajik labour migrants. The Government created 100,000 new jobs in different sectors of the economy each year in an effort to reduce the scale of labour migration. Other government initiatives focused on continuous professional development, interest-free loans for small and medium-sized enterprises, remunerated community service and unemployment benefits.

7. Men and women were guaranteed equality in the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights. Tajikistan had been one of the first States in the region to accede to the International Labour Organization Convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value and had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Citizens had the right to form trade unions and could join and resign from them freely. Trade unions were independent, and 44 were currently registered in Tajikistan.

8. Special attention was paid to the family, which was the basis of society. The Family Code had been amended in 2010 to raise the age of marriage from 17 to 18 years of age, in order to support girls' education and their preparation for independent living. Performing an underage marriage or marrying a person who was underage incurred criminal liability. An ombudsman for children would be established in 2015, which had been designated the "Year of the Family".

9. The Constitution of Tajikistan provided for the right to health care. Citizens were entitled to free medical care in State health-care institutions. Private services could be used on a fee-paying basis. A programme to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic had been introduced for the period from 2011 to 2015. There were 240 HIV testing points and more than 350 specialists available to provide voluntary consultations and testing. In addition, there were units for the provision of services intended to reduce the risk of infection among vulnerable populations, including intravenous drug users, sex workers and former prisoners. Special attention was also paid to tuberculosis. A treatment programme that conformed to World Health Organization recommendations had been introduced in all regions in 2014. Free tuberculosis testing was available to all and a programme to reduce tuberculosis had been operating in prisons since 2007. Measures were being taken to reduce child mortality, and maternal and child mortality had been halved between 2000 and 2014.

10. The right to education was a constitutional right; secondary education was provided free of charge in State institutions. School enrolment levels had reached 99 per cent for primary and secondary education, while preschool institutions provided care for more than 100,000 children. More than 1,000 educational institutions had been built from 2010 to 2014, and the number of higher education institutes had almost tripled. Female students made up 59 per cent of all students in higher education. State spending on education increased each year and would total almost 3 billion somoni in 2015.

11. **Mr. Kedzia** (Country Rapporteur), commending the State party on the extensive information provided in the report and the written replies to the Committee's list of issues, asked whether reports to human rights treaty bodies were generally prepared through a participatory process that included civil society. The core document for Tajikistan dated from 2004 and should be updated when convenient.

12. He wished to know why a national human rights plan — which had proven to be an important human rights tool in many countries — had not been developed. More information would be appreciated on the establishment of a national human rights institution in accordance with the Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (the Paris Principles). The Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights had "B" status, according to the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions. No information had been received on its placement within State structures, how it was financed and how the Commissioner was nominated and elected. Information on the Commissioner's engagement in the protection of economic, social and cultural rights, in particular with regard to victims of violations of those rights, would be useful.

13. He asked why Tajikistan was ranked 152 of 174 countries in the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index. The delegation should also comment on

findings indicating that corruption in the public sector was systemic, an assessment that was reflected in the views of the majority of the population. The relationship between a culture of petty corruption and the phenomenon of grand corruption involving high-ranking public officials should be elucidated.

14. Despite the examples of court judgements that referred to the Covenant provided in the written replies, alternative sources had been sceptical about the willingness of judges to invoke international norms, possibly due to a lack of training. The written replies made reference to a strikingly limited amount of time dedicated to training on the Covenant, and he wished to know whether the Government intended to improve the situation. Was the State party taking or planning to take steps to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Covenant?

15. **Mr. De Schutter** asked whether the Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities Act clearly prohibited discrimination against persons with disabilities and whether it required reasonable accommodation to be made to help integrate persons with disabilities. The delegation was requested to comment on the fact that, in Tajikistan, persons with disabilities were classified in ways that did not comply with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, which led to exclusion from employment; on information alleging that many public and private buildings in Tajikistan were not accessible to persons with disabilities; and on whether the quota for the recruitment of persons with disabilities was fully implemented.

16. Information before the Committee indicated that the Act on State guarantees of equal rights and opportunities for men and women, adopted in 2005, did not in fact provide sufficient guarantees in that domain. He asked for information on the protection of women from indirect discrimination and on positive action to benefit women, neither of which was provided for explicitly in the legislation. Expressing concern at the decline in the employment of women between 2004 and 2009, which indicated a need to take positive action to improve women's presence in the labour market and to combat stereotypes, he said that a further concern was the overrepresentation of women in the agricultural sector, in which informal employment and limited access to social protection were prevalent.

17. **Mr. Schrijver** asked what was being done to raise awareness about the Covenant among professionals and the public and how the Covenant was included in training programmes for the judiciary, lawyers and civil servants. He asked whether the State party's definition of anti-discrimination covered discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and requested clarification in general regarding anti-discrimination in law and in practice.

18. **Ms. Bras Gomes** said that Tajikistan lacked comprehensive legislation covering all the grounds for discrimination included in the Covenant, and there appeared to be no legal definition of discrimination. The rich diversity of Tajikistan could be a source of problems, and she therefore asked whether the Government had considered the need for programmes integrating measures for different groups into a single framework or national plan. Given concerns about transparency in the use of official development assistance and donor funds, she wished to know whether the Interdepartmental Commission on Foreign Debt was required to provide information to the public, and if so, how it met that requirement.

19. **Ms. Shin,** noting that since Tajikistan had gained independence, the Tajik language had become essential to day-to-day life in the country, said that she wished to know how the State party ensured that persons from minority groups could learn to speak Tajik while maintaining their own culture and language, particularly outside formal educational institutions. Since gender stereotyping needed to be addressed to ensure success in other measures, such as increasing women's achievements in education and employment, she asked how the State party was tackling the problems of gender roles and stereotyping.

20. **Mr. Pillay** asked for clarification of whether there had been problems with the status of the Covenant in Tajikistan and requested further information on its invocation in the courts. The written replies indicated that corruption had mainly been tackled in terms of the material harm caused to the State, rather than the criminal conviction of offenders.

21. **Mr. Abashidze** asked for the Government's forecast on migration figures, given that Tajikistan shared a border with Afghanistan, where the situation was likely to worsen with the withdrawal of foreign troops. He wished to know whether the Government had requested or received technical assistance from international organizations, particularly the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and requested information on migration legislation and plans for incoming refugees.

22. **Mr. Uprimny Yepes** asked whether judges were able to seek to protect a person from discrimination on the basis of his or her sexual orientation, and if so, whether the delegation could provide examples of cases in which that had happened.

23. Although it was understood that the State party faced certain economic limits to its activities, the Special Rapporteur on the right to health had indicated that health care spending in Tajikistan was extremely low, even when compared to countries at a similar level of development. He asked why more effort was not being made to furnish resources in support of the right to health, as recommended by the Committee in its previous concluding observations. He asked for information on legal provisions whose effect was that NGOs and other associations suffered disproportionate interference in their activities and found it difficult to access foreign funding.

24. **Mr. Kedzia** said he would appreciate comment on reports that, because of court costs and legal fees, people from disadvantaged groups had only limited access to effective remedies in the event of violations of their rights.

25. **Mr. Ribeiro Leão** asked whether Tajikistan had any plans to offer free legal aid, including to members of disadvantaged groups, and whether efforts to promote employment had had any effect on the realization by Tajik citizens of their right to gain their living by work freely chosen or accepted.

26. **Ms. Shin** said that, as she understood it, women in the State party were still barred from employment in professions in which conditions were considered harmful. She asked whether conditions considered harmful to women might not also be considered harmful to men; whether such prohibitions did not perpetuate gender stereotypes; and why many professions were off limits to women. She also understood that the retirement age was lower for women than for men and asked the delegation to explain the reason why.

27. **Ms. Bras Gomes** asked how the State party was dealing with changing migration patterns, including large increases in the number of women leaving the country. She requested information on any measures taken to address recent increases in the number of emigrants returning to Tajikistan as a result of deportation or the economic slowdown in the Russian Federation. What support was provided to the families of those who left the country and those who returned? Under a system currently being developed, pensions would depend heavily on employee contributions. Women, however, were less likely to be in paid employment, and even when they were, they generally earned less than men. She therefore wondered whether the Government had taken any steps to address what was highly likely to be a widening gap between the incomes of male and female pensioners. Lastly, she asked how frequently social welfare payments were revised upwards.

28. **Mr. Martynov** requested clarification of the Government's intentions regarding ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. He asked whether there was any data on the numbers of Tajiks who had returned from abroad in the wake of the economic downturn in the Russian Federation and on the impact of the downturn on

financial inflows to Tajikistan, remittances in particular. He also wished to know what share of the country's total economy was accounted for by the informal sector and whether its labour inspectors had the authority to close down companies found to be in breach of the country's labour laws.

The meeting was suspended at 4.15 p.m. and resumed at 4.20 p.m.

29. **Mr. Shohmurod** (Tajikistan) said that Tajikistan had not yet ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities but that efforts were under way to make it possible to do so in the near future. Although it was true that Tajikistan did not have a law specifically on non-discrimination, discrimination was addressed in the country's Constitution and covered by a number of its laws. In response to the question about the country's readiness to deal with the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan, he said that Tajikistan, in concert with coalition forces, was developing a plan to handle any resulting humanitarian emergencies, including the possible arrival of large numbers of Afghan refugees.

30. By 2016, the country should be in a position to pass a law on the provision of free legal aid, which had been the subject of a recent presidential address to parliament. Consultations were under way on a draft amendment to the laws regulating NGOs, in particular as they pertained to their international sources of funding. Information about access to possible sources of such funding was freely available to the public.

31. **Mr. Ashurov** (Tajikistan) said that in Tajikistan all interested ministries and agencies took part in the drafting of the reports to be submitted to international human rights treaty bodies. After consultations with international specialists and NGOs, the reports were considered by an inter-agency commission responsible for oversight of the country's international human rights commitments and revised accordingly. The replies to the list of issues were produced in very similar fashion. Preparing reports afforded an opportunity to identify potential problems, such as any legislation that needed to be amended.

32. The Supreme Court had established a mechanism by which the provisions of international treaties could be applied in domestic law, and the courts in general often referred to provisions of the Covenant in their rulings. The Constitutional Court had done so when it had examined the constitutionality of recent legislation on the right to divorce and on the right to a pension. Starting with the first universal periodic review in 2011, and for each review thereafter, the Tajik authorities had prepared a national action plan to implement the recommendations of the Human Rights Council. The current plan included information on the Government's analysis of the possibility of acceding to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, many of the provisions of which were already compatible with the country's laws and regulations.

33. Despite considerable recent efforts — more than 5,000 cases of alleged corruption had been investigated by the courts in the period 2009–2014 — corruption was still a major concern, including in law enforcement agencies and the military. The President himself had attended a recent meeting of the State Committee on National Security at which the causes of corruption had been addressed and measures to combat it had been adopted. Lastly, subjects related to the Covenant had been included in the programme for training judges, and there was an eight-hour required course on international human rights obligations.

34. **Mr. Shohmurod** (Tajikistan) said that, to combat corruption, the Tajik authorities had been working to implement specific recommendations made by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

35. **Ms. Hasanova** (Tajikistan) said that the country's statistics agency published annual statistical indicators on the advancement of women in Tajikistan. The number of small farms owned by women had increased by more than 20 per cent, a broadly similar

percentage of women had been elected to the upper house of parliament and women were increasingly likely to become entrepreneurs, often with government support in the form of microcredit. Girls were also encouraged to participate more fully in school life, and the numbers of girls studying had increased. A growing trend towards gender parity in primary and middle schools was encouraging.

36. Although a large-scale survey in June 2009 had shown that the numbers of men in employment were much greater than the numbers of women, it had been conducted well before the harvest, when the rural women of Tajikistan, a largely agrarian country, were not working in the fields. When the population was surveyed in September, a much larger percentage of women was found to be in employment. The statistics agency intended to carry out such surveys more often, but they were expensive. In 2014, the gap between women's wages and men's had narrowed yet again, as pay in the service sector, which was dominated by women, was rising faster than in other sectors.

37. **Mr. Shohmurod** (Tajikistan) said that although prohibiting women from taking certain jobs could indeed perpetuate stereotypes, government policy and programmes were focused on empowering women and girls and encouraging them to become more active in Tajik society.

38. **Ms. Tagoeva** (Tajikistan) said that the Tajik Constitution prohibited discrimination against persons with disabilities; other protections afforded to such persons could be found in the Tax Code and the Labour Code. Following the establishment of a quota system, several thousand persons with disabilities had found work, and more than 500 had enrolled in institutions of higher learning. The hope was that those students would be able to find paid employment once they graduated; the Ministry of Labour had launched campaigns to raise awareness of the possibility of employing persons with disabilities.

39. Measures adopted for the advancement of women and girls included the development of a targeted vocational training programme and the provision of microcredit to women and low-income families. Labour inspectors did not have the authority to shut down companies or worksites that were in violation of labour laws: such cases had to be referred to the courts. In response to the question on migrants returning from the Russian Federation, she noted that migration in Tajikistan had always been highly seasonal. Efforts were being made to create jobs in the country, so that Tajik citizens, in particular women, could find employment there. As a result of the falling rouble, however, the number of returning migrants had increased slightly. Bilateral agreements with the Russian Federation dealt with such issues as the validity of work permits and the registration of migrant workers with the authorities. The Tajik Government had also put forward a cross-border pension proposal that had recently been submitted to the Russian authorities.

40. **Ms. Hasanova** (Tajikistan) said that in January 2014, remittances, including funds from minor international transactions, had been only slightly less than in January 2013. Migrant workers had access to special accounts that enabled them to make deposits abroad at no extra charge.

41. **Ms. Tagoeva** (Tajikistan) said that the Government had just developed a programme to increase employment in the formal economy and to deal with the issue of migration. As part of the programme, a plan to counteract the effects of the crisis in the Russian Federation had been launched. The overarching aim was to provide jobs for Tajiks in Tajikistan.

42. **Mr. Alizoda** (Tajikistan), recalling that the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights had been accorded "B" status by the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions, said that the Government had set up a working group to draft the amendments necessary to strengthen that institution, thereby giving effect to the recommendations on that subject made to Tajikistan. The working group was also

examining the possibility of appointing an ombudsman for children. Of the 3,200 complaints received by the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, around 50 per cent concerned infringements of economic, social and cultural rights. The vast majority of those complaints had been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainants, who had been granted the appropriate remedies.

43. **Mr. Mirboboev** (Tajikistan) said that, while Tajikistan was home to over 100 ethnic groups, the official language of the country was Tajik and persons from all ethnic groups were required to learn it. The Government had taken steps to ensure that all persons from other ethnic groups had access to Tajik language instruction. Schools catered to the needs of students for whom Tajik was not their first language through the provision of specially designed textbooks and specially trained teachers. Tajik language instruction was also provided to adults, including business leaders and professionals working in the commercial sector. Russian was recognized by the Constitution as a language of communication.

44. **Mr. Ribeiro Leão** asked whether the National Development Strategy contained targets for poverty reduction and whether the State party had adopted a general strategy to combat poverty.

45. **Mr. Pillay** asked what measures the State party had taken to deal with the current housing shortage and to guarantee persons from disadvantaged backgrounds access to social housing. He asked how the State party ensured that individuals and families who had been forcibly evicted from their homes had access to temporary accommodation and were resettled in areas with job opportunities and the necessary amenities. He also asked whether an official survey had been conducted on the extent and causes of homelessness in Tajikistan and whether shelters were available to homeless persons.

46. **Ms. Shin** asked whether the State party intended to introduce a universal health insurance system; what proportion of men and women routinely used some form of contraception; and whether abortion was used as a form of birth control. Noting that the high rate of maternal and infant mortality in the State party could be partly attributed to factors such as inadequate housing and poor diet, she asked what measures the State party had taken to address those problems with a view to reducing the number of preventable maternal and infant deaths.

47. **Mr. De Schutter** asked what steps the State party had taken to deinstitutionalize children with mental and physical disabilities and to place them in alternative care settings and in mainstream schools.

48. **Mr. Dasgupta**, noting that Tajikistan was a transit and destination country for drug trafficking from Afghanistan, asked to what extent illegal drugs affected the health of the Tajik population and contributed to the spread of HIV/AIDS in the country.

49. **Mr. Atangana** asked what proportion of the 1,600 complaints of violence against women received had given rise to criminal penalties as opposed to administrative penalties. He also wished to know whether the State party's domestic legislation contained specific provisions to combat domestic violence. If so, had they been invoked to convict perpetrators of that offence and were they dissuasive enough to prevent convicted perpetrators from reoffending?

50. **Mr. Schrijver** asked what measures the Government had taken to ensure respect for and to promote the cultural rights of the diverse cultural and socioeconomic groups living in the country and whether their views and wishes concerning the way in which they exercised their cultural rights were taken into account.

51. **Mr. Uprimny Yepes**, noting that the current deficiencies in the State party's basic health-care services could be attributed to the misallocation of resources to secondary and tertiary services rather than to where they were needed most, asked how the State party

planned to remedy that situation. He enquired as to whether the increased rate of HIV infection was linked to the increased use of injectable drugs in the State party; whether it had adopted a policy to combat the use of such drugs; and whether their consumption constituted a criminal offence.

52. **Mr. Kedzia**, noting that there were reportedly 200,000 children in Tajikistan who engaged in some form of work and did not attend school, asked how the State party planned to remedy that situation. The Committee had received reports that around 50 per cent of the population suffered from malnutrition and that drug trafficking accounted for between 30 and 50 per cent of the Tajik economy. He requested the delegation to comment on the veracity of those reports.

53. **Mr. Kerdoun** said that the measures taken to curb absenteeism and the high dropout rate in schools appeared to have been ineffective and that the State party needed to step up its efforts in that area. He enquired as to the obstacles that had rendered those measures ineffective and asked how the State party planned to reduce the high dropout rate among girls, students living in rural areas and students belonging to ethnic minorities. Noting that teachers in public schools were often unqualified and that families who could afford to do so sent their children to private schools, he asked how the State party planned to improve the quality of the education provided in public schools and to ensure that all teachers were properly qualified. He also wished to know of the steps taken by the State party to ensure that all children in urban and rural areas had access to preschool education.

54. **Mr. Mancisidor** said that, given the apparent gender disparity in access to primary and secondary education in the State party, the Committee would welcome disaggregated data on the primary and secondary school attendance rates for boys and girls so as to have a clearer overview of the situation. If girls' access to education was somehow limited, he would be interested to know how the State party planned to remedy that situation.

55. **Mr. Chen** asked how the State party ensured that all ethnic and language groups living in Tajikistan enjoyed equal access to education. Noting that textbooks on human rights were published in Russian only, he asked whether the State party planned to make them available in other languages.

56. **Mr. Kedzia** enquired as to the impact of the global financial crisis on the school system in Tajikistan and, in particular, on tertiary level education. He requested the delegation to comment on the reasons behind the low completion rate of basic education among girls and students belonging to disadvantaged groups and on what appeared to be a revival of traditional stereotypes on the role of women in society, which could restrict their access to education. He commended the State party on its efforts to provide Internet access across the country but would be interested to know whether disadvantaged and marginalized groups enjoyed equal access to that service.

57. **Ms. Bobohojieva** (Tajikistan) said that the Government viewed the health sector as a priority, and the proportion of the State budget allocated to it was increased on a yearly basis.

58. **Mr. Ashurov** (Tajikistan), referring to the situation of refugees, said that Tajik legislation contained provisions that were in line with those of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. Many refugees either returned home or settled in third countries such as Canada; those who remained in Tajikistan had sought the extension of their refugee status. The Government had set up a working group to devise a national action plan to deal with the refugee situation. On the border with Afghanistan, areas had been identified with a view to erecting refugee camps if required. A citizenship bill that referenced the provisions of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees was currently being examined and would soon be brought before parliament.

59. **Ms. Hasanova** (Tajikistan) said that the retirement age for men and women was 62 and 58 respectively. Most persons drawing a pension began to do so once they had reached retirement age: some retirees also received invalidity pensions. The population's average age was 25 and the active population accounted for just under 50 per cent of the total. However, it should be noted that between 11 and 12 per cent of the active population were in full-time education and many migrants working in Tajikistan did not pay into a pension fund. Given that the number of pensioners far outnumbered the number of persons working, it was difficult to guarantee them a sufficient pension.

60. **Ms. Tagoeva** (Tajikistan) said that a reform of the pension system was under way. The law on pensions guaranteed working citizens a minimum State pension which the Government intended to raise, taking into account the minimum wage, which was to be raised in 2015, and the daily subsistence level. Male and female pensioners who had worked for more than 25 and 20 years, respectively, were entitled to the minimum State pension, while persons who had not worked that long or who could not work were entitled to a social pension. The Government had adopted a series of measures aimed at facilitating the integration of migrant workers upon their return to their home country, had amended domestic labour laws and had adopted rules and regulations governing career services for migrant workers returning home. The national employment programme laid down the procedures for accrediting migrant workers and for providing them with training and microcredit to promote entrepreneurship in their home country.

61. **Mr. Shohmurod** (Tajikistan) said that Tajikistan lacked the necessary resources to create the required number of attractive employment opportunities. The Government needed to do more to improve access to energy in rural areas, as employment activities were often curtailed by the limited availability of electricity in those areas.

62. **Ms. Hasanova** (Tajikistan) said that the results of the National Development Strategy had already been analysed. The Government had adopted a range of measures aimed at improving the general well-being of the population, including measures to combat poverty, and most of those measures had now been implemented. Economic growth and increased funding had helped to reduce extreme poverty. Rural areas continued to be disproportionately affected by poverty, however. Surveys on household expenditure had shown that spending on non-food items had increased, which indicated that the living standards of the population had improved.

63. **The Chairperson** asked to what extent those responsible for devising the National Development Strategy and the various strategies and measures to combat poverty had drawn on the provisions of the Covenant. He requested examples of court rulings in which the Covenant had been expressly mentioned.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.